

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 and 8-20 are pending in the above-identified application. Claim 7 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. With this Amendment, claim 7 is amended as suggested by the Examiner and is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, claims 1-6 and 8-20 are at issue in the above-identified application.

**I. 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) Anticipation Rejection of Claims and
35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Obviousness Rejection of Claims**

Claims 1 and 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being purportedly unpatentable over Igaki, et al., U.S. Patent 6,479,763. Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over Igaki in view of Yokono, U.S. Patent 5,150,005. Claims 4, 5, 6, and 8 were rejected under section. 103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over Igaki in view of Curcio et al, U.S. Patent 6,452,117. Finally, Claims 9-20 were rejected under section 103(a) as being purportedly unpatentable over Igaki in view of Stevens, U.S. Patent 6,392,356, in view of Nakazawa et al., U.S. Patent 6,411,349, and further in view of Curcio. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

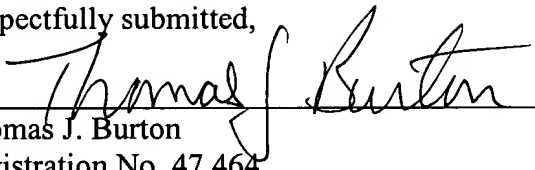
Applicants submit that Igaki is an improper reference under 102(e). The present patent application has an effective filing date of September 27, 1999 by virtue of foreign priority to Japanese Patent Application No. Hei 11-271950. Because the International Application of Igaki was filed before Nov. 29, 2000, Igaki has an effective U.S. filing date of March 9, 2000, when the International Application was published. (See MPEP § 706.02(f)(1)). Applicants submit herewith a certified translation of Japanese Application P11-306245 to perfect their claim for

priority over Igaki. Accordingly, Igaki cannot be cited as a 35 U.S.C. §102(e) reference against the present patent application, and therefore the Applicants respectfully request that the respective rejections be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that all claims now pending are clearly allowable over the cited prior art, and respectfully requests early and favorable notification to that effect. If the Examiner believes that a conference would be of value in expediting the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned counsel to arrange for such a conference.

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